

Telling Our EOP Stories

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Educational Opportunity Program



Counselor Spotlight: Kizzy Lopez

by Nu Vang

Students know Kizzy Lopez as a counselor and mentor for the Renaissance Scholars Program which serves to guide foster youth students through their rough years in college; however students may not know that Kizzy has had her own struggles through her educational career and still is.

Kizzy was a foster child herself and was homeless the first month of her freshman year in college. Along with that, she also had to take care of her younger sister. Although times were tough for Kizzy, she knew that the path to higher education was the way to improve her quality of life and also to better her future. "I had hoped that I would get married and if I didn't, I wanted to be able provide for myself," Kizzy said.

Kizzy credits her strong moral background from her church, her mentors, and also her parents as to why she kept straight on the education path instead of easily drifting off in other directions. Through all her struggles and hard work, Kizzy would eventually receive her Associate's degree from San Joaquin Valley College. Then later on, she received her Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies and her Master's in Education at National University.

Education played a very important role in her life which propelled her to pursue a career within education. "I thought being a counselor could be a way to encourage and motivate young people without directly having to be in the class room," Kizzy said. "Education was such a driving force for me and such a safe haven that I wanted to continue to be in that realm."

Her passion for education eventually led her to the EOP office, where she interned and help created the Renaissance Scholars Program which is a scholarship program that assists foster youth like herself. She believes that students are very capable of succeeding in college. They just need the extra support. Kizzy's passion for helping students has steered her towards working on her doctoral degree in Higher Education Leadership at Azusa Pacific University in Azusa. "I really want to effect more change," Kizzy stated. "I like being a practitioner and working everyday with individual students, but I want to more of an influence on changing the policies.

Kizzy hopes to analyze the strengths and positive sides of students and figure out why they succeed. This past October, she had the opportunity see how different groups of orphan youth were impacted by college, which took her across the world. As part of her doctoral program, Kizzy spent two weeks in Cambodia and Korea and saw how college impacted the lives of orphan youths there. "I thought what a great opportunity to do a cross cultural study and to see what the differences and similarities are" Kizzy explained.

She was able to see the conditions that students were in and respected them after realizing how similar their journey towards higher education was to her own. Kizzy plans on traveling back to Cambodia next year again, to do more research in the area that she will be studying. Eventually, Kizzy would like to become a national consultant to help implement different types of support programs for the diverse populations of students who are in college. She truly is a believer that education is a lifelong process.

Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)
California State University, Fresno
5150 N. Maple Ave
Fresno, CA 93740

Call: 278.1787 or Visit: www.csufresno.edu/eop